

NSC BRIEFING

1 October 1957

25 YEAR
RE-REVIEW

LAOS

I. A new phase of the 2½ year old negotiations between the Pathet Lao (PL) and Laotian government opened in Vientiane on 16 September. Despite a deadline of 9 October imposed by Laotian government there is little indication that Pathets are ready to make significant concessions.

A. PL tactics in negotiations largely dilatory, dealing in generalities and demanding additional guarantees.

25X1

B. PL Chief Souphanonuong

in 11 September speech he took line that extension of government control over PL provinces and integration of Pathet troops to be simultaneous with formation of coalition government, ^{or} rather than prior step to coalition as government insists.

II. Ascendancy of conservatives in royal government serves to check Premier Souvanna Phouma's willingness to enter relatively ~~unguarded~~ unguarded settlement with PL.

A. Foreign Minister Phoui and Interior Minister Katay, (both pro-West) dominant figures in Souvanna govt., both favor "hard line" on PL settlement.

B. They responsible for choice of low-level delegation to negotiate with PL.

C. Souvanna's "free wheeling" in talks with brother Souphanonvong also checked by requirement he make no commitment without cabinet approval.

III. Lao cabinet to be expanded in early October with prospect that Katay and Phoui will be even more firmly in saddle.

25X1

IV. PL likely to maintain pose of reasonableness to keep talks going and avoid resumption of hostilities hoping to build popular pressure for settlement on PL terms. 25X1

V. Royal government will probably not break off talks after 9 October deadline.

- A. Popular pressure for settlement too great.
- B. One possibility is that gov't may re-consider Katay plan to trick PL into bogus settlement, get rid of ICC and treat PL as internal problem.

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